

GNYACSM Abstract

Association between Social Media Use, Muscle Dysmorphic Disorder and Psychological Health in Urban College Students

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ABSTRACT

The online fitness industry has expanded significantly in recent years. Since 2014, TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat have also grown tremendously, resulting in young adults spending hours scrolling on their smartphones looking at perceived ideal-body images. Muscle dysmorphia is a form of body disorder indicated by a pathological desire for increased muscle mass. Among American college students, the most prevalent diagnosed mental health problems are anxiety disorder and/or depression. **PURPOSE:** This pilot study evaluated the relationship between social media use, psychological health, and muscle dysmorphic disorder in ethnically diverse students attending an urban commuter college. **METHODS:** Forty-three students (mean age = 21.9 ± 3.61 years) attending the fitness center at York College in Jamaica, Queens, participated in the study and answered questionnaires about social media use and exercise habits. Muscle dysmorphic disorder was assessed by using the muscle dysmorphic disorder inventory (MDDI). Mental health was assessed using self-report measures of anxiety, perceived stress, depression, positive affect, and self-efficacy from the NIH Toolbox. The bivariate Pearson Correlation analysis was conducted to correlate social media use and psychological health scores with muscle dysmorphic disorder. **RESULTS:** No correlation was found between social media use and MDDI scores ($p > 0.05$). A significant positive correlation ($p < 0.05$) was observed between exercise frequency, exercise duration, and MDDI scores. In addition, there were significant positive correlations between MDDI scores and levels of depression ($r = 0.38$; $p < 0.01$), anxiety ($r = 0.55$; $p < 0.001$), and perceived stress ($r = 0.50$; $p < 0.01$). While positive affect and self-efficacy demonstrated significant negative correlation with MDDI scores ($r = -0.42$, $p < 0.01$ and $r = -0.46$, $p < 0.01$, respectively.) **CONCLUSION:** These findings indicate that increased severity of muscle dysmorphic symptoms is associated with higher levels of depression, anxiety, and perceived stress. Moreover, these findings suggest that both positive affect and self-efficacy are inversely associated with symptoms of muscle dysmorphic disorder.